Col. Willis Riddick (1725-1782) had this portrait by an anonymous artist painted on ivory as a young man. Riddick was commandant of the Nansemond County Militia in the War for Independence, and though the unit's roster books carried 644 names, less than 200 could be turned out to impede the British invasion of Suffolk in May, 1779. Riddick's home, "Old Retreat," on the White Marsh Road, was burned by the British in their attack because it contained "military stores." Riddick's home and outbuildings were completely destroyed, and all the foodstores with it. Riddick had married Mary Faulk in 1744 and they had three sons and four daughters.

Paying Troops

1756 – There was an Act passed making provision against invasions, insurrections, etc.; and pay for soldiers from Nansemond county. Under this Act Capt. Edward Wright received his pay and the guards for conducting drafted soldiers to Fredericksburg and for their subsistence; the amount being 34 pounds, 13 shillings and 4 pence. Under the same Act Jethro Sumner was paid for a horse which he had furnished for the same purpose, receiving his pay in 1765.

The names of some of the soldiers from Nansemond who went to the French and Indian wars, Christopher Best, Obediah Fogey, Ephraim Pope, Francis Sine, Francis Walker, James Rawles, Henry Champion, Ben Cotton, Joseph Buffin (likely Buskin), Richard Powers, William Thomas, John Carroll. These men were scattered in the companies of Captains Joshua Lewis, Henry Harrison, Robert Spotswood, – Morris. Only five were natives of Virginia.

Colonial Governor

Bennett's Creek-Named for Richard Bennett who brought land in Nansemond County in the 1630s. He was a major general in the militia and a prominent citizen of the county. He was Governor of Virginia under Cromwell from 1652 to 1655. Bennett owned 2,000 acres of land which today includes the area from the King's Highway bridge to the Nansemond River Bridge and down the west side of Bennett's Creek to Driver. When Bennett died he left some of this land to the poor in Sleepy Hole Parish.

'Hearty Good Wishes Of Our People'

Lafayette's Visit Turned Out Town

"In 1824 - 47 years after the date of his first landing on America soils as the friend and ally of the struggling colonies - Congress invited him to make another visit. In obedience to this wish he embarked with his son and secretary for New York, where he landed on August 15th of that year. He visited in succession each of the twenty-four states and all of the principal cities. In 1826 he accepted an invitation to visit Suffolk, and his arrival here was attended with all the 'pomp and circumstance' of a triumphal entry. All of the vehicles in the neighbor were in demand and many of the most of prominent citizens turned out to meet him at old Tony Pugh's, nine miles below town. The Columbians, under Capt. Francis D. Charlton, received him at the head of Main St., while the people followed the procession en masse to the Castle Inn. Here the noble guest was asked how he wished to receive the Company, and replied promptly that the would like to shake every man by the hand. After this kindly wish had been gratified, Capt. John C. Cohoon, who was Sheriff of the County and master of ceremonies on this occasion, presented citizens by name to the Marquis, who shook hands with all and expressed his pleasure at the cordiality of the reception accorded him. That night there was high festivity in Suffolk, at the Court House, at the hotels, and on the following morning the Marquis left for Murfreesboro, N.C., accompanied by the blessings and hearty good wishes of our people."

Sketch Book of Suffolk by Edward Pollock

Editor's Note: Through Revolutionary War period, Suffolk's soldier citizenry had belonged to the Nansemond **militia, but after the war, it** was felt that the town was entitled to its own company. Accordingly, the Columbians were organized.

The following is excerpted from The Roanoke-Chowan Story by Tom Parramore as printed in The Daily Roanoke Chowan News:

Ch. 14. "Lafayette, You Were Here"

Lafayette's Party

On the evening of February 23, 1825, Lafayette left Washington by steamboat, arriving at Norfolk in the early hours of Friday, February 26th.

"I did wish," he wrote to his friend Thomas Jefferson, "...to take the Warrenton Road to Raleigh. But it is so broken, and any accident productive of delay would be so fatal to my plan that we have found ourselves to take the sandy Lower Road by Suffolk and Hallifax."

Suffolk Fetes General

Having already visited Norfolk in October (Oct. 19, 1824), Lafayette pushed on to Suffolk that same morning (Feb. 25, 1825) on the first leg of his southern tour. Suffolk had only hours to prepare for the general's arrival but had provided handsomely in the scant time available. On the evening of his arrival a great banquet was held on the second floor of the Nansemond Court House, **followed by an extended** round of toasts and introductions lasting until he and his suite retired at 11 p.m. Lafayette rose early the next morning, breakfasted with the Suffolk Board of Trustees and the arrangements committee, and at 9:30 a.m. boarded his coach for the long day's journey to Murfreesboro. With an escort composed of four or five carriages and several gigs filled with Suffolk citizens who would conduct him to the North Carolina line, Lafayette and his party were by 10 o'clock rolling through the countryside toward Somerton.

Members of the Suffolk escort, having discharged their duties and turned the honored guest over to a North Carolina escort, became the overnight guests of Dr. O'Dwyer. Those mentioned by name: Dr. Murdagh, Dr. Shepherd, and Capt. Mills Riddick, the latter having presided the previous **evening at the banquet in Suffolk.**

Comfortable in Suffolk

While Murfreesboro labored through the night, the **fabled French nobleman lay** asleep in Mrs. Dickinson's comfortable boarding house in Suffolk. The sixty-eight year old general had now been in the United States for six months, having come for his final visit at the invitation of the federal Congress.

Mr. Parramore's Source: Journal of Dr. Thomas O'Dwyer of Murfreesboro, N.C.

1837 - The Great Fire

"Our Town was visited in 1837 (June 3rd, a Saturday) by a very destructive fire, which swept all that part between the cross streets (Milner and Mahan) from Mr. Arthur Smith's to the Court House, including the Court House, jail, and every dwelling except the low brick house (opposite to Mr. Well's saddle factory) belonging to the Shelton family.

Letter from Archibald Allen of Rose Hill, Nansemond County to William G. Driver, edited by Fillmore Norfleet

Dr. Norfleet's note adds this information:

The fire nearly destroyed the town of Suffolk, burning houses on both sides of Main St. from the post office to the courthouse. The low brick house which was spared was a long, dormer-windowed brick house on the northwest corner of Mahan and N. Main streets that the vestry of Upper Parish, Nansemond Co, had ordered built in 1752 as an almshouse and received from the builder, Josiah Riddick, at its completion in 1754.

Leaves Of History

Sumner's Suffolk

1742—A town was chartered at Constance's warehouse to be known by the name of Suffolk, 50 acres of land was bought from Jethro Sumner and his wife, Margaret, who was Sullivan, and the land was laid off in lots by Thomas Milner, surveyor. Trustees were appointed by the Act to purchase and hold the land. The salaries of inspectors at the county warehouses were as follows: Sleepy Hole, 25 pounds; Lawrence's, 35 pounds; Constance's, 30 pounds. Obligations were by law allowed to be paid in money by those persons who did not raise tobacco. Another commission was appointed to take depositions regarding the destroyed county records.

1742 – The first fair in America was held in Richmond, Va.

1789. – Capt. John Cowper Cohoon was born. Job Scott, a Quaker preacher, visited Nansemond County and wrote some notes on same.

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